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T H E S P I S:

O R, A

CRITICAL EXAMINATION

INTO THE

MERITS of all the Principal PERFORMERS

BELONGING TO

DRURY-LANE THEATRE.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. KEARSLEY, (N<sup>o</sup> 1.) in LUDGATE-STREET.

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# T H E S P I S.

**B**OLD is his task in this discerning age;  
When every witling prates about the stage;  
And some pert title arrogantly brings  
To trace up nature thro' her noblest springs:  
Bold in such times, his task must be allow'd  
Who seeks to form a judgment for the croud;  
Presumes, the public sentiment to guide,  
And speaks at once to prejudice and pride.  
Of all the studies in these happier days,  
By which we soar, ambitiously to praise.

B

Of

Of all the fine performances of art,  
 Which charm the eye, or captivate the heart;  
 None like the stage our admiration draws;  
 Or gains so high, and proper, an applause.  
 Yet, has this art unhappily no rules  
 To check the vain impertinence of fools,  
 To point out rude deformity from grace,  
 And strike a line 'twixt acting and grimace.

HIGH as the town, with reverence we may name,  
 And stamp its general sentiments to fame;  
 Loud, as, perhaps, we eccho to its voice,  
 And pay a boundless homage to its choice;  
 Still, if we look, minutely, we shall find  
 Each single judge so impotent or blind,  
 That ev'n the actor whom we most admire,  
 For ease or humour, dignity or fire,  
 Shall often blush to meet the ill-earn'd bays,  
 And pine beneath an infamy of praise.

How oft, soul-searching GARRICK, have I hung  
 On every accent of that wond'rous tongue;

When



When in Old LEAR, returning into sense,  
And faintly guessing at some past offence,  
To gain CORDELIA's pardon thou hast pray'd,  
And knelt by instinct with that suffering maid!  
How has my breast then labour'd with its sigh,  
And the big sorrow delug'd all my eye;  
While keen delight perform'd a traitor's part,  
And ach'd intensely round my struggling heart!  
Yet, in those moments, when I sought to find  
An equal transport in the public mind;  
When I believ'd a sympathy wou'd shine  
In every eye as honestly as mine;  
A lifeless pause, perhaps, has gloom'd along,  
And drowsy dulness sat upon the throng;  
Enormous curls have slept on empty blocks,  
Or well-bred curtsies shot from box to box;  
Whereas, when prisoner, and in fetters bound,  
A peal of praise has thunder'd all around,  
And every hand employ'd its utmost pains,  
To clap the mighty merit of the chains.

WHEN things, like these, for ever give offence,  
And empty shew is lifted over sense:

When

When men throw nature negligently by,  
 And judge not from the feelings, but the eye;  
 Nay, when our actors, in their busiest parts,  
 While fear or hope stand beating at our hearts,  
 From the warm scene may scandalously run,  
 And feast the galleries with an instant pun;  
 Then, keen-ey'd satire, consciously shou'd rise,  
 And hold a mirror to the public eyes;  
 Alike regardless of her foe or friend,  
 With candour blame, with honesty commend;  
 Applaud, if right, the man she may detest,  
 And strike, if wrong, the brother of her breast.

'Tis on the stage, as 'tis in life, we find  
 No single man quite excellent in mind;  
 Nor do we meet a bosom so deprav'd,  
 So lost in vice, and utterly enslav'd,  
 But what, at times, some transient spark of grace  
 Has beam'd his eye, and flush'd upon his face;  
 With pitying warmth intuitively stole,  
 And pierc'd the Stygian fable of his soul.

Therefore,

Therefore, unlike some brothers of the pen,  
 Who judg'd of actors as they judg'd of men,  
 In wild extremes ridiculouſly trod,  
 And drew, by turns, a dæmon or a god;  
 My tints from life ſhall regularly glow,  
 And paint both faults and beauties as they grow;  
 Convinc'd, the trueſt pictures muſt be made,  
 Where light is blended properly with ſhade.

LONG in the annals of theatric fame;  
 Has truth grac'd GARRICK with a foremoſt name;  
 Long in a wide diverſity of parts,  
 Allow'd his double empire o'er our hearts;  
 Either in mirth to laugh us to exceſs,  
 Or, where he weeps, to load us with diſtreſs---  
 Nor is it ſtrange, that e'en in partial days,  
 He gains ſo high an eminence of praiſe;  
 When his united requiſites are more,  
 Than ever centred in one mind before:  
 Say, if we ſearch, minutely, from the age  
 In which old THESPIſ firſt began the ſtage,

And range thro' all the celebrated climes,  
 In which it flourish'd, to the present times,  
 Where shall we find an actor who has prest,  
 With such extensive force upon the breast,  
 Fill'd such opposing characters for years,  
 Unmatch'd, alike, in laughter or in tears?  
 Others, perhaps, the greatest of their hour,  
 Whom fame extoll'd as prodigies of power,  
 Have yet to scanty limits been confin'd,  
 And shewn but one dull tendency of mind;  
 On bold blank-verse heroically rose,  
 Or meanly ambled upon humbler prose---  
 OTHELLO's form a BETTERTON might wear,  
 And rend the soul with horror and despair;  
 BOOTH might with conscious majesty declaim,  
 And build on CATO a substantial name;  
 In WILDAIR, WILKES most certainly might soar,  
 And CIBBER's fop set millions in a roar;  
 But which of these like GARRICK cou'd appear,  
 In ROMEO, SHARPE, in DRUGGER and in LEAR;  
 Fill the wide rounds of passion as they fall,  
 And shine with equal excellence in all?

Yet,

YET, tho' thus warm I freely pour my thoughts,  
I still must think that GARRICK has his faults;  
Some casual errors in his parts, which run  
As specks sometimes will fasten on the sun;  
Ev'n in his LEAR, where desperately wild,  
He stabs the ruffians to preserve his child,  
And quite worn out with tenderness and rage,  
Leans, wholly spent, and breathless on the stage;  
Then, while the tide of sympathy has rose,  
And every bosom labour'd with his woes,  
Then have I seen him negligently fall,  
Full with his face against the prison wall,  
Snatch every feature strangely from our sight,  
And check the flood of exquisite delight.

THO' fam'd APOLLO, at a touch cou'd give,  
The warming canvass almost how to live;  
Tho' scarce to less than deity, when grown,  
He call'd out new creations of his own;  
Yet, when the weakness of his art he saw,  
'The Grecian father's agony to draw,  
'Twas wise, a veil upon his face to throw,  
Whose pangs he found impossible to shew;

But when, even Shakespear never cou'd possess  
Too big a grief for GARRICK to express,  
When his sharp eye so piercingly can roll,  
And dart such instant passions thro' the soul,  
'Tis doubly wrong, the tenderer the case,  
To hide the wond'rous workings of his face;  
To check our hopes, or play upon our fears,  
And damp the rich-soul'd luxury of tears.

For five long years in dark oblivion thrown,  
Has LEE remain'd, neglected and unknown,  
Unless, when chance, on some capricious start,  
Has kindly blest him with a decent part;  
Yet was this LEE, at one auspicious hour,  
Allow'd to boast a little share of power,  
Was thought in various characters to please,  
And fam'd no less for energy than ease,  
For me, who feel a tenderness of breast,  
Where'er a dawn of merit seems oppress'd,  
I may, perhaps, be partial to his faults,  
And do him more than justice in my thoughts;  
But when I see the genuine passions rise,  
Which flame in ABOAN's red resenting eyes;

When I behold in VERNISH's disgrace  
 The struggling soul so stamp'd upon the face ;  
 Or meet in BELMONT with that dangerous art,  
 Which even for crimes can plead about the heart ;  
 I own, it wounds my temper and my taste  
 To find him still so despicably plac'd ;  
 Sent on in FRENCHMEN, RALEIGHS, and GLENDOWERS,  
 While things like PACKER surfeit us for hours.  
 'Tis true that LEE has fatally imbib'd  
 A mode of speech not easily describ'd ;  
 A nice affected drawlingness of phrase,  
 A wire-drawn tone in every thing he plays ;  
 With which, too oft, most execrably fine,  
 He racks a word, and tortures out a line ;  
 Yet still has LEE a consequence of form,  
 A voice and look so capable to warm  
 A stage struck heat, so vehemently strong,  
 With such a piercing consciousness of wrong,  
 That even when BARRY, in his noblest course,  
 Some few weeks since exerted all his force ;  
 Strain'd every nerve to draw the scattering crown,  
 And cram'd his moon-ey'd idiot on the town ;

D.

Then

Then did this LEE burst on us in a blaze,  
And wake us all to wonder and to praise;  
Give vile IAGO's deeply scheming ire  
The boldest touches of dramatic fire,  
And swell the gen'rous PIERRE with a flame  
That left even JAFFIER but a second fame.  
Hence, mean foe'er, as managers may prize,  
I look on LEE with very different eyes,  
And freely place, however they disdain,  
His chair next GARRICK's high in Drury-Lane.

THE greatest charge our little judges lay  
When HOLLAND's worth they critically weigh,  
Is, that in all the characters he tries,  
His master GARRICK ever fills his eyes;  
That meanly servile in his walk of parts,  
He strives to shine by imitative arts,  
And now, so dull a copiest is grown,  
To want all sense and feeling of his own.  
In this nice age, when fatally disgrac'd,  
Poor sense falls martyr'd at the shrine of taste,  
When a mere word, indefinite and vain,  
The random coinage of the coxcomb's brain,



By truth and judgment wholly unconfi'd,  
And differing still in ev'ry different mind,  
Usurps the air of sentiment, to pass  
For sterling gold her despicable brass;  
Then imitation certainly must fall,  
And raise the general enmity of all;  
Must own the pride-taught sentence to be just,  
And lick the foot that tramples it in dust.  
Yet, sure, if GARRICK hitherto has ran  
By reason's line, and justly laid his plan  
On that exalted principle of art,  
Which knocks with truth's bold hand against the heart;  
If in the various characters he plays  
The genuine form of nature he conveys,  
And hits, in short, upon that happy right,  
Which gives the finest essence of delight,  
Those who affect to turn away the head  
When HOLLAND seeks his vestiges to tread,  
Must argue less from judgment than from whim,  
Since copying nature is to copy him.  
But, why at all should critics proudly start,  
And seem to frown on imitative art?

Where

Where worth, or fame our admiration raise,  
A wish to copy is a kind of praise---  
Say in this age, some genius shou'd we find  
So rich in thought, and vigorous in mind,  
As gave the fury of a stage desire,  
Even the pale glimm'ring of a SHAKESPEAR's fire,  
Should we not all inevitably throng  
To hail the glowing wonders of his song,  
And with a wild munificence reward  
The faintest traces of our deathless bard?  
For me, unapt to criticise in haste,  
And little guilty of a modern taste;  
I own this HOLLAND ever my offence,  
But where he draws from GARRICK, and from sense;  
While he does this, I patiently attend,  
And often find no little to commend,  
With honest warmth his plaudit I can hear,  
And join myself the tribute of a tear.  
But when some air-born fancy to pursue,  
He lets his master once escape his view;  
When much too great for imitation grown,  
He boldly seeks a manner of his own,

Sententious,

Sententious, dull, and heavy he appears,  
 His words like weights hang dragging on our ears ;  
 Fatigues to death in spite of all our power,  
 And drawl the minute's sentence to an hour---  
 Nor is this all, a stupid sort of stare,  
 A starch'd, stiff, staking, awkwardness of air,  
 Absorb at once his figure and his face,  
 And scorn all marks of nature and of grace ;  
 While the purs'd lips, to wind up ev'ry pause,  
 Important swell and bully for applause.

FEW for so short an interval have gain'd  
 A higher rank than POWELL has obtain'd ;  
 And few, in fact, at present on the stage,  
 Deserve a warmer notice from the age.  
 Form'd with some lines that happily express  
 No little sense of pity and distress ;  
 And form'd with tones that frequently impart  
 No little share of softness to the heart,  
 On many minds he tenderly can steal,  
 And teach a drowsy auditor to feel.

Hence, in those parts where wretchedness and years  
Alarm alike our pity and our fears,  
Where the poor LUSIGNAN, from prison led,  
Shakes the white honours of his sacred head:  
O'er his sweet Pagan tenderly complains,  
And calls again for darkness, and for chains;  
Or, where old HENRY, sick'ning with despair,  
Upbraids the wildness of his madcap heir;  
In parts like these, to POWELL I attend  
A strong admirer, and a steady friend.---  
But, when in gay LOTHARIO he wou'd shew,  
The sprightly airs of libertine and beau;  
Or give in TOWNLY, to a modish wife,  
The nicer touches of superior life;  
Not all the scrapes, or cringes which he tries,  
Those paltry arts of little men to rise;  
The scorn of sense and judgment can remove,  
Or teach one honest blockhead to approve.

As yet, two raw young striplings on the stage,  
Unfit for fight, tho' burning to engage,

Led on by hope, courageously to press,  
Yet taught by sense, to practise for success ;  
No judgment, now, of CAUTHERLY I frame ;  
Nor settle BENSLY's title to a name.---  
Where first essays are diffidently tried,  
A candid mind must cautiously decide ;  
Nor rashly risque opinions, which in time  
The muse herself may censure as a crime.

WHERE the gay muse in laughter loves to sport,  
And brisk THALIA holds her hum'rous court,  
YATES with high rank, for ever must be plac'd,  
Who blends such strict propriety with taste ;  
From nature's fount so regularly draws,  
And never seeks to trick us of applause.  
Mark, when he plays, no vacancy of face,  
No wand'ring eye, or ignorant grimace,  
Is rudely suffer'd once to intervene,  
Or check the growing business of a scene ;  
Nay, in his silence, happily employ'd,  
He looks continual meaning on the void ;  
Bids every glance with character be fraught,  
And swells each muscle with a burst of thought.

Hence, in those cruder sections of a part,  
 Where want of humour must be fill'd by art,  
 Where the poor poet, in some luckless fit  
 Mistakes a dull prolixity for wit;  
 His merit shines with undiminish'd rays,  
 And lifts whole troops of RESTLESS's to praise.---  
 Yet there are times, when spite of all his care,  
 Our taste must bristle, and our sense must stare:  
 When a new part unhappily he plays,  
 A thousand doubts perplex him, and amaze;  
 Fast from himself he tremblingly retires,  
 Nor trusts that worth which all the world admires;  
 But on a sea of causeless terror tost,  
 Allows both mind and memory to be lost.

BUT tho' on YATES the comic muse may shower  
 An ample fund of humour and of power;  
 Tho' in his walk of characters he claims  
 So high a place among theatric names,  
 Still there are others in her smiles who share,  
 And prove her generous as they know her fair.  
 Oft in some whim, the buxom nymph will try  
 To pass for KING upon the public eye:

On TOM or RANGER, wantonly will seize,  
And give us all his spirit and his ease :  
Again, in PRATTLE physically prim,  
She steals each look and attitude from him ;  
And like a virgin, whose unpractis'd breast  
Some blooming youth entirely has possess'd ;  
Who, if mischance unhappily should start,  
To wound the face that captivates her heart,  
Feels no unkind propensity to rove,  
But throbs all pitying with a softer love ;  
So, when emaciate with disease and years,  
Her fav'rite KING in OGLEBY appears,  
The comic muse exerts unusual force  
To call down laughter from its richest source ;  
Glow with a flame additionally warm,  
And seems in more than raptures with his form---  
O! that the goddess, in some lucky hour  
Wou'd wisely try the utmost of her power,  
Wou'd tell her KING, that in the well-bred smart,  
Too great a pertness quite destroys the part ;  
And, when a BASSET's habit he wou'd wear,  
Dismiss the saucy SMATTER from his air.

VERNON to favour ne'er can have pretence,  
A finger truly,---and disgac'd with sense.  
Why should a fellow blest with such a strain,  
As still can charm us to the verge of pain,  
The melting soul in extasy absorb,  
And almost pluck a planet from its orb;  
Why should he strive in such a sing-song age,  
To soar by sterling merit on the stage,  
Or seek by knowledge in dramatic laws,  
To reach a vulgar MASCULINE applause?  
Did he indeed, ne'er generously rise  
Beyond the TOM TALE, or the LONDON CRIES,  
With which of late, so dead to every shame,  
He meanly pimp'd for prostituted fame,  
Some room for easy pardon might be found,  
And dullness join most lovingly with sound;  
But, when PHARNACES, or MACHEATH we see  
So nerv'd with thought, so spirited and free,  
When ev'n his flimsiest characters of song  
Can strike our minds so wonderfully strong,  
Our honest rage eternally must live,  
And prudence make it madness to forgive.



PALMER, from playing almost every night,  
Has grown so long familiar to our sight,  
That even in scenes scarce possible to bear,  
We kindly rate him as a decent player.  
Yet, since the stage its first existence drew,  
An odder compound never struck our view;  
Nor did the drama ever yet produce  
So bad an actor half so fit for use.  
Mark with what grace his person is design'd  
For parts of life, and characters refin'd;  
Yet, that strange shambling of deportment see,  
Tho' easy, stiff; and manacled, tho' free;  
Tho' strait, yet doubled; tortur'd, tho' in form;  
Aukward, tho' bred; and spiritless tho' warm---  
Tho' fraught with tones articulate and clear,  
He keeps an endless screaming on the ear;  
Howls out young OAKLEY in such hideous strains,  
As midnight wolves might use upon the plains,  
And strangles poor Sir BRILLIANT in a note  
Too nicely horrid for a human throat.  
But, tho' in wide and capital respects,  
I see in PALMER manifest defects;

Tho'

Tho' that addrefs fo terrible muft feem,  
And that vile voice excruciate with its fcream;  
Yet, ever ready in the heaviest parts,  
He fcorns all aid from defpicable arts,  
And ever mafter of his author's aim,  
Juft to his fenfe, and cautious of his fame,  
With fecret pleafure I behold him rife,  
And cry, "Peace," always to my ears and eyes---

IF ftrong good fenfe, and latitude of mind,  
A keen conception, and a tafte refin'd,  
A long acquaintance with thofe nicer arts  
That read thro' life, and ftudy thro' our hearts,  
An actor's name with certainty might raife,  
Or bind his temples with the generous bays,  
Who againft LOVE a fyllable cou'd breathe,  
Or once difpute his title to a wreath?  
But, 'tis not tafte or judgment which can give  
An actor's name eternally to live;  
Or even the wideft knowledge of mankind,  
Which ftamps, thro' time, his image on the mind---  
Hence, tho' in FALSTAFF, LOVE has oft exprest,  
A nice obfervance of the human breaft;

Tho' in his BAYS we readily admire  
 The critic's clearness and the actor's fire,  
 Yet, when we see him on GRANADA's throne,  
 The dupe of ZARA's fury and his own ;  
 Or mark in GLOSTER, with what nerveless rage  
 He drives poor SHORE to wander from the stage,  
 We all lament the cruelty of fate,  
 Which damns so good an actor into state,  
 And find these sceptres quite as dangerous things,  
 To mimic monarchs as to actual kings---

IN foreign footmen, BADDELY alone  
 Preserves the native naifness of tone,  
 And in his manner strongly shews ally'd  
 Their genuine turn of abjectness and pride.  
 If proofs are wanting, on CANTON I call,  
 And ask the general sentiments of all---  
 Here then, secure of competence and name,  
 He ought to rest his fortune and his fame,  
 And not in buckish epilogues, which spring  
 With real life from nobody but KING ;

At random rifque, the favour which we shower  
On scenes more fuited to his tafte and power---

BLEST with the happieft nothingnefs of form,  
Which nature e'er with being ftove to warm,  
On life's juft fcale fcarce capable to ftand,  
A kind of mandrake in creation's hand;  
See DODD, in all his tininefs of ftate  
Refift his ftars, and counteract his fate,  
On actual wants prepofteroufly fhine,  
Abfurdly great, and defpicably fine---  
Fram'd at his birth a coxcomb for the ftage,  
He foars the foremoft fribble of the age,  
And ftuck by chance on fome egregious plan,  
A mere nice prim, epitome of man,  
In every coinage of the poet's brain,  
Who blends alike the worthlefs and the vain,  
Who in fuch parts as FADDLE, has defign'd  
A fopling's figure for a villain's mind;  
There DODD's fine want of all exterior weight,  
New points our laugh, or doubly whets our hate,

Hangs

Hangs the vile slave more openly in morn,  
And brands him still with aggravated scorn---  
But when at WILDAIR's elegance he tries,  
Or seeks in well-bred NOVELTY to rise;  
When on those parts he fatally will strike,  
Which urge no scorn, and furnish no dislike,  
There all his price inanity misplac'd,  
Disgusts alike our judgment and our taste:  
There he provokes our ridicule, or rage,  
And melts poor WILDAIR down into a page---

'Tis true, in life we frequently behold  
A daring spirit in the smallest mould,  
And ne'er from face or person think to find  
The latent turn of principle or mind:  
But in the drama, with creative fire,  
We give each part the person we desire,  
Expect all grace in BEVIL's thou'd be seen,  
But ask for SNEAK's diminutive and mean---  
Hence, if deceiv'd, that fascinating rage  
Which nerves the scene, and vivifies the stage,  
Calls out illusion thro' the roar of strife,  
And warms the moral fiction into life;

That instant, flags no more to be possess'd,  
And spreads one torpid dullness thro' the breast---

BORN to delight a laughter-loving age,  
And give fresh funds of humour to the stage;  
Mark with what strength of unaffected ease,  
That happy WESTON commonly can please:  
Tho' bold, yet simple; forcible, tho' cool;  
Fine without trick; and finish'd without rule---  
In those still scenes of *scarce existing* life,  
Where SNEAK breathes only to obey a wife;  
Or where poor DRUGGER publicly display'd,  
Hangs out the mere dull animal of trade;  
There WESTON's worth with certainty may rest,  
Nor fear the strictest rigidity of test;  
There a sublime stupidity of face,  
As dead to sense as destitute of grace,  
A fix'd, relaxless vacancy of lines,  
With such true genius generally shines,  
That quite surpriz'd, tho' satisfied we gaze,  
And all is mirth, astonishment, and praise.  
Of all the walks in which the humorous power  
Of comic wit can exercise an hour;

Perhaps, that cold inanimated way  
 In which an actor never seems to play;  
 In which the chiefest merit of a part  
 Exists entirely in the want of art;  
 The strongest force of requisites may claim,  
 And prove the hardest avenue to fame---  
 To WESTON's praise, then generously true,  
 The muse shall raise him publicly to view;  
 A first rate actor of the NOKES's kind,  
 Best when least shewn, and happiest when confin'd---  
 But, when by some fatality misled,  
 A rage for praise has overset his head;  
 When grown quite arch he madly quits his place,  
 And seeks to soar by pertness and grimace;  
 When in attempting at some paltry joke,  
 The fine dry dullness of his face is broke,  
 With just disdain I turn my head aside,  
 And damn alike his ignorance and pride---

To say that HAVARD never has a claim  
 To some small portion of theatric fame;

H

To

To say quite roundly, that we never shed  
 Some tranſient gleams of favour on his head,  
 The public knowledge groſſy would abuſe,  
 And fix a laſting ſtigma on the muſe;  
 Yet, when our eye upon his claim we throw,  
 And ſee what lifeleſs plaudits we beſtow,  
 When thro' his round of requiſites we trace,  
 Think on his voice, his figure, and his face,  
 And find plain ſenſe, and memory, at moſt  
 Are all the mighty merits he can boaſt,  
 We ſteal in pity from our ſtricter plan,  
 To praiſe his private virtues as a man,  
 And while the charms of genuine worth engage,  
 Deſt the hour he firſt beheld a ſtage.

HURST, with his talents for life's ancient ſcenes,  
 Muſt riſe in time, if mindful of the means;  
 But when with years, and with diſeaſes bow'd,  
 What need of tones extravagantly loud?  
 LAURENCE may counſel, and expreſs his fears,  
 Yet ſhew ſome kind attention to our ears;

And



And woe-worn ADAM may exclaim for bread,  
Without once splitting a spectator's head---  
He who would seize an audience by the heart,  
Shou'd always judge the nature of his part ;  
And in proportion as the scene requires,  
Suppress the talent-working of his fires ;  
Since too much force propriety destroys,  
And white-hair'd grief is never mark'd by noise ;  
Should poor old LEAR forget his tott'ring gait  
To ape young AMMON's majesty and state,  
Or godlike CATO from his seat advance,  
To treat the grinning gallery with a dance ;  
With what a wild amazement would we stare,  
And check the mad'ning progress of the player ?  
If then, with HURST we mildly wou'd engage,  
And ask the various properties of age,  
Wou'd palsied limbs be all he wish'd to own,  
Or wou'd he give it feebleness of tone ?

BUT mark with what vulgarity of stare,  
What low unmeaning impudence of air  
That mud-ey'd MOODY, whose relentless face,  
No blush e'er crimson'd with a moment's grace,

Gapes around the house, regardless of his part,  
All brass in front, and marble all in heart ;  
For him no scene, however it may flow  
With high-wrought wit, or agonizing woe,  
Once on his breast can fortunately steal,  
Or teach that ruthless bosom how to feel---  
Yet, tho cut off from every just pretence  
To taste, to nature, decency and sense,  
Tho' no blest beam of sympathy e'er stole  
To rouse the deep stagnation of his soul ;  
Still, while O'CUTTER happily can please  
With brainless bravery, and with brutal ease ;  
While every human principle of breast,  
Falls vily martyr'd to an IRISH jest,  
There his wide want of sentiment and shame,  
So nicely tallies with the poet's aim,  
That truth herself must combat in his cause,  
And yield the crown of infamous applause---

NOT so the modest ACKMAN strikes our view,  
Whose parts, tho' neither eminent nor new,  
Still from his strict propriety and care,  
Must here be rank'd a tolerable player.

Small as his round of characters appear,  
 He ne'er offends, our vision, or our ear,  
 But always decent, perfect, and in place,  
 Fills his short walk with judgment and with grace---  
 'Tis not a circuit of five hundred lines  
 Thro' which a hero rants away or whines,  
 That e'er an actor's merit can decide,  
 Or serve the candid critic for a guide---  
 The poor plain foldier while the battle glows,  
 Who darts courageous on his gath'ring foes,  
 With dauntless breast beholds his danger rife,  
 And nobly scorns to shudder, tho' he dies,  
 Is, in my thought, a much more worthy name  
 Than he, who dead to honour and to shame,  
 Howe'er hung round with title or command,  
 Intrench'd in dastard discipline can stand,  
 On doubtful orders hesitate to fight,  
 And rush on noon-day error to be right.

BRANSBY to greatness never makes pretence,  
 Yet seldom strikes at decency or sense ;

But humbly careful, thro' the round he plays,  
 Avoids all cenfure, if he meets no praise---

AICKIN has various requifites to please;  
 A handsome perfon, and an inborn eafe,  
 A manly accent, forcible and clear,  
 A ready memory, and a happy ear---  
 And, if the poet with prophetic verfe  
 'Thro' fate's dark womb can accurately pierce,  
 An hour will come, when time's improving hand  
 Shall teach his tafte and judgment to expand,  
 And in dramatic annals mark him fair,  
 Tho' not a great, a ferviceable player.

BURTON is one of thofe unnotic'd things,  
 Who make good lords, or fecondary kings,  
 The liveliest mind to ftupefaction lull,  
 So wifely flat, and rationally dull---  
 And yet, with all that wond'rous weight of lead,  
 Which bounteous fate has given him for a head,  
 He ftill poffeffes fuch amazing arts  
 To rife quite perfect in the heaviest parts,

That

That all, with me, must highly praise his pains,  
And own his memory, tho' they doubt his brains.

BUT now, let justice doubly arm the muse,  
And tenfold candour consecrate her views;  
For now, her genuine equity of breast  
Must stand a keen unmitigating test;  
And those who think, that friendship or offence  
Are yet unmingled in the poet's sense,  
May fear, when female characters he draws,  
Lest truth shou'd suffer from a softer cause.  
Indeed, where female merit must be tried,  
'Tis hard to judge, and dangerous to decide,  
A secret something in our breasts will warm  
Where eyes can languish, and where lips can charm;  
And age itself instinctively will glow,  
To press a ball of animated snow:  
But yet, thro' all the pleadings we can trace  
The wond'rous pleadings of a heavenly face,  
The bard still mindful of desert alone,  
All partial ties will honestly disown;  
From sacred conscience shudder to depart,  
And speak his judgment, tho' he wounds his heart.

VINCENT and WRIGHT, for what the poet cares,  
 May warble sweetly thro' some trifling airs ;  
 But till some ray of kind perception rests  
 With genial heat upon their mindless breasts :  
 They still must raise our pity or offence,  
 Whene'er they claim an intercourse with sense.

Not so the gentle BADDELEY, whose form  
 Sweet as her voice, can never fail to charm ;  
 Whose melting strain no ARNE's eccentric skill,  
 As yet has tortur'd into modern thrill :  
 She, if our bosoms are not wholly steel,  
 In poor OPHELIA forces us to feel ;  
 From envy's self roots up the ling'ring sigh,  
 And spreads red anguish o'er her mad'ning eye---  
 Yet of such gifts, tho' happily possess'd,  
 She rather *grows*, than *rushes* on the breast,  
 And rather wins the passions to her course,  
 Than strives to storm them by immediate force ;  
 Hence, in the soft and tender walks alone,  
 Her latent fund of talents must be shewn ;  
 And here a just distinction she must bear,  
 If train'd with proper nicety and care---

BARRY has tones, which instantly impart  
 An aking sense of pleasure to the heart;  
 But where a first-rate eminence we claim,  
 How small a title is a voice to fame!

HOPKINS in MILLWOOD, and the third-rate cast,  
 To public favour rushes on so fast,  
 That tho' unequal, widely to engage  
 With many first class parts upon the stage;  
 Still, if her rank we accurately trace,  
 And give her worth due eminence of place,  
 Not fix, perhaps, thro' BRITAIN we shall find  
 But what she leaves considerably behind---

FORM'D for those coarse and vulgar scenes of life,  
 Where low-bred rudeness always breathes in strife,  
 Where in some blessed union we find  
 The deadliest temper with the narrowest mind;  
 The boldest front that never knew a fear,  
 The flintiest eye that never shed a tear;  
 There, not an actress certainly alive  
 Can e'er dispute pre-eminence with CLIVE;

There boldly warm, yet critically true,  
 The actual woman blazes on our view ;  
 From self-struck feeling nobly draws her praise,  
 And soars, in fact, the character she plays---  
 But, when to taste she makes the least pretence,  
 Or madly aims at elegance and sense ;  
 When at high life she despicably tries,  
 And flares her frowzy tiffue on our eyes,  
 There the wide waddle, and the ceaseless bawl,  
 Provoke the general ridicule of all,  
 And nought but NEWGATE LUCY we can know,  
 Trick'd out, and dizen'd for some city shew.

POPE, tho' undamn'd with any casual part  
 Of CLIVE's weak head, or execrable heart ;  
 Yet, with almost her readiness enjoys  
 A coarse wrote scene of turbulence and noise ;  
 And like CLIVE too in those superior spheres,  
 Where ease delights and elegance endears,  
 That shapeless form to grace so unally'd,  
 That roaring laugh, and manliness of stride,

In



In spite of pity, force us to be just,  
And all we feel is hatred or disgust---

Is it not odd, that still upon the stage  
So few attend to person or to age;  
That awkward, clumsy, or distorted shapes,  
Like new caught bears, or badly tutor'd apes,  
Fast from those parts ridiculously crowd,  
In which their honest merits are allow'd,  
To stain some high and educated place,  
Which asks the finest polishes of grace?  
Is it not odd too, that the hoary head  
By some strange dæmon ludicrously led,  
From those grave casts eternally withdraws,  
In which it still can totter with applause  
To mumble, quite insensible of shame,  
Some scene all youthful energy and flame?---  
But such, alas! is ignorance or pride,  
That self still kindly will for self decide,  
And while the passions rule the giddy hour,  
We all mistake our wishes for our power---

BUT see where sprightly ABINGTON appears,  
Happy alike in person and in years ;  
Pleasing tho' pert ; familiar, tho' polite ;  
Nervous, tho' free ; and spirited, tho' light :  
As long as ease, vivacity, or fire,  
Can find a chearful audience to admire,  
With just regard her talents it will rate,  
Strong, if not fine, and various, if not great.

PRITCHARD, tho' now unequal to her prime,  
And withering swiftly on the stalk of time ;  
Yet still retains a magic kind of art,  
To charm the eye, and twist about the heart,  
Throws some refin'd delusion o'er the stage,  
And quite absorbs infirmity and age ;  
Yet form'd, perhaps, the moment of her birth  
For humour chiefly, elegance and mirth,  
Her tragic parts are less replete with life  
Than ESTIFANIA, or the Jealous Wife ;  
Hence, tho' I always honestly admire  
Her MACBETH's madness, and her ZARA's fire,  
Still when I see her obviously distress'd  
To hurl the passion strongly on my breast ;

When I behold her in this dang'rous courfe,  
 Struggling for ftrength, and ftaining after force,  
 I wifh her kindly in that walk of eafe  
 Where every line inftructed how to pleafe,  
 Springs from her lips fuperlatively warm,  
 Sure to delight, and pofitive to charm---

O that the hour, whene'er it is defign'd  
 To blefs the well known virtues of her mind,  
 On PALMER's breaft might charitably fhower  
 Some diftant dawnings of the mother's power,  
 One cafual gleam of PRITCHARD might difpenfe,  
 And wake the beauteous ftatue into fenfe,  
 That no juft cenfure on our fav'rite's race  
 May brand her name with relative difgrace.

YATES, with fuch wond'rous requifites to charm,  
 Such powers of face, and majefty of form;  
 Such genuine grandeur with fuch fweetnefs join'd,  
 So clear a voice, and accurate a mind,  
 In fame's firft feat muft certainly be plac'd,  
 While BRITAIN boafte of judgment, or of tafte.

Say, in what walk of greatness, or of grace,  
This matchless woman justly shall we place,  
In which she still possesses not an art,  
To melt, to fire, to agonize the heart?  
If in CORDELIA to our minds we raise,  
The more than magic softness she displays,  
Will not a gush of instant pity spring,  
To mourn the father, and lament the king?  
Or, when the hapless BELVIDERA's tale  
Of brutal RENAULT turns the husband pale,  
Does not the force with which she then exclaims,  
Light every eye-ball into instant flames?  
Rage with a fire too big to be express'd,  
And rend the coldest fibres of the breast?  
But, tho' unequall'd in those tragic parts,  
Which fall with weight, and hang about our hearts,  
'Tis not on these she wholly rests her name,  
Or builds a title to dramatic fame---  
Mark, in the gayer polish'd scenes of life,  
The sprightly mistress, or the high-bred wife,  
What wond'rous grace and dignity unite  
To fill us still with exquisite delight;

Mark how that nameless elegance and ease,  
 Can teach e'en MURPHY's ribaldry to please;  
 With actual life his cold BELINDA warm,  
 And tell that whining LOVEMORE how to charm---  
 Peace to thy shade, and may the laurel bloom  
 With deathless green, O CIBBER, on thy tomb!  
 Peace wond'rous OLDFIELD ever wait thy shrine,  
 Thou once chos'n priestess of the sacred nine;  
 For while this YATES, the utmost reach can show  
 Of comic grace, or soul-distracting woe,  
 We find no reason for the sorrowing tear,  
 Which else wou'd fall incessant on your bier.

CURSE on that bard's malignity of heart,  
 How fraught foe'er with energy or art,  
 Who once thro' YATES's requisites cou'd trace,  
 Yet find no dawn of meaning in her face---  
 Oft CHURCHILL, often when BELLARIO's fears  
 His faith, his wrongs, have plung'd us into tears---  
 Has the sweet anguish of this YATES's sighs  
 Forc'd that stern bosom instantly to rise:  
 Oft as her fine ductility of breast  
 Some new-born passion on the bosom preßt,

Taught the soft ball more meltingly to roll,  
 And drew out every feature into soul;  
 Then have I seen, this censor who cou'd find  
 No glance whatever vivified with mind,  
 Lost in a storm of unaffected woe,  
 Till pitying nature bid the torrent flow,  
 Reliev'd the tortur'd bosom thro' the eye,  
 And gave his sentence publicly the lye---

YET, high soever as the poet rates  
 The well-known worth and excellence of YATES,  
 He cannot give perfection to her share,  
 Nor say she's wholly faultless as a player---  
 Sometimes her sense too exquisitely strong,  
 By needless force will deviate into wrong;  
 And sometimes too, to throw this fault aside,  
 She blends too little tenderness with pride:  
 What need CALISTA, ent'ring on the stage,  
 Exclaim, "Be dumb for ever," in a rage?  
 Her faithful woman gives her woes relief,  
 And justice calls for temper, tho' for grief---  
 Again; when MODELY stands reveal'd to view,  
 And comes all suppliant to a last adieu,

What need that cold indifference of air,  
 That stiff unbending haughtiness of stare?  
 'Tis true, the wretch deserves our utmost scorn---  
 Yet her resentment is but newly born;  
 And we shou'd read distinctly in her eyes,  
 That still she loves, howe'er she may despise---  
 Where women once a passion have profess'd,  
 They may resent; but never can detest;  
 Nor where the basest fav'rite they discard,  
 Conceal all marks of pity and regard---

THUS has the poet on old DRURY tried  
 With care to judge, and candour to decide;  
 And shou'd the kind indulgence of the times  
 Approve thus far his motley string of rhimes,  
 His aim he yet more widely may pursue,  
 And BEARD's light squadrons in their turn review---  
 Thro' all the pomp of coronations pierce,  
 And give their best manœuvres in his verse---  
 Here, for the present then, he drops his plan,  
 Puts off the critic, and assumes the man;

Convinc'd, if truth shou'd only warm his muse,  
 The PUBLIC smile will still promote her views;  
 And conscious too, shou'd prejudice or pride  
 Appear alone her sentiments to guide;  
 The PUBLIC scorn her pen must cease to brand,  
 The sooner justice strikes it from her hand.

## F I N I S.

## E R R A T A.

Page	Line		
13	3	for Fatigues,	read Fatigue.
18	2	disgrac'd,	disgrac'd.
18	12	Tom,	Tomb.
23	7	price,	nice.
27	6	talent,	latent.
28	1	around,	round.
29	1	round of,	various.





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